

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 SAN JO 01173 050016 Z

70

ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SCEM-02 AID-20 EB-11 NSC-10 RSC-01

CIEP-02 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-08 OMB-01 CEA-02 SIL-01

LAB-06 COME-00 FPC-01 DODE-00 PM-09 INRE-00 PC-15

RSR-01 /123 W

----- 109663

P R 042315 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3666

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

USCINCSO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAN JOSE 1173

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, CS

SUBJECT: ELECTRICITY CRISIS HITS COSTA RICA

BEGIN SUMMARY: ELECTRIC COMPANY OFFICIALS HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT ELECTRICITY WILL BE SHUT OFF FOR MOST OF THE SAN JOSE METROPOLITAN AREA FROM 7 A. M. TO 7 P. M. DAILY EFFECTIVE APRIL 5. (ONLY EXCEPTION IS SMALL DOWNTOWN AREA LUCKILY INCLUDING EMBASSY AND MOST OTHER USG OFFICES.) PRIMARY CAUSE OF RATIONING IS THAT WATER FLOW IN RIVERS IS INSUFFICIENT TO POWER THE NATION'S HYDROELECTRIC GENERATORS, DUE TO LAST YEAR'S UNUSUALLY DRY RAINY SEASON. PROJECTED INSTALLATION WITHIN NEXT FEW WEEKS OF TWO GAS TURBINES MAY EASE RATIONING, BUT ONLY PROLONGED HEAVY RAINS WILL ENABLE GOCR TO TERMINATE IT. IMPLICATIONS OF RATIONING ARE THUS FAR PRIMARILY ECONOMIC: MOST INDUSTRIES WILL PROBABLY LOSE AT LEAST TWO WEEKS' PRODUCTION, AND BUSINESSMEN HAVE ASKED GOCR TO DECREE A STATE OF EMERGENCY.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 SAN JO 01173 050016 Z

EMBASSY WILL REPORT OTHER IMPLICATIONS AS THEY ARISE, ESPECIALLY IF ELECTRICITY RATIONING RESULTS IN JOB LAYOFFS OR SEVERE SCARCITIES OF FOOD AND OTHER NECESSITIES. ACTION REQUESTED: ALTHOUGH EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NO RPT NO PLEASES FOR USG EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE, DEPT SHOULD BE AWARE OF DRASTIC SITUATION AND READY TO REPLY TO SUCH REQUESTS SHOULD THEY BE RECEIVED. END SUMMARY

1. THE COSTA RICAN ELECTRIC POWER GENERATING AND DISTRIBUTING ENTITIES ANNOUNCED APRIL 4 THAT IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO SHUT OFF ALL ELECTRIC POWER TWELVE HOURS A DAY (7 AM TO 7 PM) IN ALL OF THE SAN JOSE METROPOLITAN AREA EXCEPT FOR A SMALL AREA IN THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN SAN JOSE. THIS SHUTDOWN WILL BE EXTENDED TO THE ENTIRE NATION (WITH VERY FEW EXCEPTIONS) ON APRIL 11. REASON FOR ELECTRICITY RATIONING IS UNUSUALLY LOW LEVEL OF RIVERS FEEDING HYDRO-ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANTS, IN TURN A RESULT OF LAST YEAR'S UNUSUALLY DRY RAINY SEASON AND THIS YEAR'S PROLONGED DRY SEASON. THUS IT IS NOT A CASE OF PEAK HOUR CONSUMPTION OVERLOADS, AND ONLY BY CLOSING DOWN TURBINES CAN WATER LEVELS BE BUILT UP. ELECTRIC COMPANY OFFICIALS ARE HOPEFUL THAT INSTALLATION OF TWO 19,000 KWH GAS TURBINES WILL BE COMPLETED WITHIN NEXT THREE WEEKS, WHICH MIGHT PERMIT REDUCED HOURS OF RATIONING. NO PERMANENT SOLUTION IS IN SIGHT UNTIL HEAVY RAINS FALL FOR A PROLONGED PERIOD, THUS RAISING RIVER LEVELS. AUTHORITIES ARE ATTEMPTING TO SEED CLOUDS WITH DRY ICE IN HOPE OF CREATING RAIN.

2. ONE- DAY PER WEEK RATIONING WAS IMPLEMENTED WITH VERY SHORT NOTICE THREE WEEKS AGO, AND THEN INCREASED TO TWO DAYS PER WEEK. AFTER INITIAL GRUMBLING (MAINLY OVER LACK OF SUFFICIENT NOTICE), MOST LOCAL INDUSTRIES AND OTHER FIRMS, SCHOOLS, ETC. IN AFFECTED AREAS ADJUSTED TO LIVING WITH RATIONING. THIS ADJUSTMENT WAS ALL TOO SUCCESSFUL, SINCE LARGE USERS OF ELECTRIC POWER MERELY ALTERED WORK HOURS AND KEPT POWER CONSUMPTION AT PREVIOUS LEVELS. THE NEW TOTAL RATIONING COULD FORCE MOST INDUSTRIES TO CLOSE DOWN COMPLETELY, AND BUSINESSMEN HAVE ASKED THE GOCR TO DECREE A STATE OF EMERGENCY. EMPLOYERS HAVE ASKED PERMISSION TO WORK NIGHTS WITHOUT INCURRING EXTRA LABOR COSTS (THIS, OF COURSE, WOULD OBIVATE SOME OF THE POWER SAVINGS THROUGH DAYTIME RATIONING). THE PROSPECT IS, THEREFORE , FOR MANY INDUSTRIES TO LOSE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 SAN JO 01173 050016 Z

AT LEAST TWO WEEKS OF PRODUCTION (FOLLOWED BY HOLY WEEK WHEN MANY PLANTS CLOSE DOWN ANYWAY), AND POSSIBLY MORE IF IT SHOULD BE NECESSARY TO CONTINUE RATIONING THROUGHOUT MONTH OF APRIL.

3. THERE HAVE BEEN REMARKABLY FEW POLITICAL REACTIONS AS YET TO THE RATIONING ANNOUNCEMENTS. MOST PEOPLE TEND TO ACCEPT THE POWER AUTHORITIES' EXPLANATION OF THE DROUGHT BEING THE SOLE CAUSE OF THE ELECTRICITY SHORTAGE. THE TWO ENTITIES PRIMARILY INVOLVED ARE AUTONOMOUS GOVERNMENT AGENCIES (THE POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY WAS AMICABLY NATIONALIZED FIVE YEARS AGO) WHICH ARE GENERALLY WELL RESPECTED. OPPOSITION PARTY CANDIDATES HAVE BEEN PREOCCUPIED AND CONTENT TO HURL BRICKBATS AT EACH OTHER

IN ANTICIPATION OF THE MAY 20 PRIMARY AND HAVE THUS FAR IGNORED THE ISSUE. NEVERTHELESS, AS RATIONING WEARS ON, AND ESPECIALLY SHOULD SCARCITIES OF FOOD AND JOB LAYOFFS DEVELOP, THEN THE POWER SHORTAGE COULD WELL BECOME A CAUSE FOR STRONG CRITICISM OF THE FIGUERES ADMINISTRATION. THUS FAR, THE ONLY SCARCITIES NOTED HAVE BEEN NON- ELECTRIC MEANS OF PRODUCING LIGHT AND HEAT.

4. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NO RPT NO REQUESTS FROM GOCR FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE, AND WE WILL NOT ENCOURAGE ANY. NEVERTHELESS, WE HOPE DEPT WILL BE PREPARED TO RESPOND SYMPATHETICALLY TO ANY REQUESTS WE FEEL MUST BE FORWARDED TO WASHINGTON.

5. ANY ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF POWER SHUTDOWN FOR EMBASSY ITSELF WILL BE REPORTED LATER BY SEPTEL.
LANE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: elyme
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SANJO01173
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAN JOSE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730433/aaaahpgz.tel
Line Count: 153
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16-Jan-2002 by willialc>; APPROVED <06-Feb-2002 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971125
Subject: ELECTRICITY CRISIS HITS COSTA RICA
TAGS: ENRG, CS
To: ARA
GUATEMALA
MANAGUA
PANAMA
SAN SALVADOR
SECSTATE WASHDC
TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005